

(For February 2019)

Around the City with City Manager David Thayer

SNOW and COLD temperatures! What an inconvenience to all in many different forms. We have been fortunate, that during the last four years, we have experienced mild winters to the point that most do not recall what a regular winter looks and feels like. I believe that Punxsutawney Phil, the weather predicting groundhog, has warned us that winter will continue well into April. Until then, we will do what we can to get by until Spring arrives.

Our snow plowing process actually has a plan behind it based on nine tiers of priority. First and foremost, the plan is built around public and employee safety, then mobility is applied across the City's entire 6 ½ square miles of area, specifically our 41 miles of roadways and 19 miles of alleys. We start at tier one, which addresses our major streets, then continues down the list. If we have another snowfall before we address the nine tiers, we stop where we are on the list and return to tier one. Once the weather breaks, we get down to the lower tiers that involve removing snow banks and hauling the snow away. Recently, we had three different snow falls closely together that kept us from getting to the bottom of the priority list. But eventually, we do get caught up. When the three cities consolidated in 2000, we had a DPW staff of 17. Moving forward, due to monetary restraint and budget cuts, we now have a six-member staff with the same number of roadways. I appreciate what our snow removal crew does for us in a timely fashion, given the limited assets they must work with.

Sub below zero weather causes one to think about freezing water lines. Our water system is designed to avoid freezing unless we experience prolong, extremely cold temperatures. We do have some design flaws where the water main is placed to shallow. We changed our ordinance last year to clarify that the city is responsible for the water mains and the laterals in the street

running to the shut off valve. The property owner is responsible for their water service from the shut off valve running into the building to their spigot. If the shut off valve is across the street, then their responsibility is from their property line into the building. We regularly review frost depth data to determine if a water main is at risk of freezing. If there appears to be a substantial risk, we authorize a “let-run” to strategic water customers to prevent the freezing of the water main. Those customers are granted a water usage credit for assisting the city. Individual customers can choose to “let-run” their water as an inexpensive prevention measure to guard against their water line from freezing without a city water usage credit.

Each fall, we try to tag each of the 351 fire hydrants in the city with a locating flag. In the winter, when snow levels rise, we may be able to find the hydrant, but not able to access them. We lack the manpower to dig out the hydrant when snow blocks their usage. However, when a house catches on fire, the lost three or four minutes it takes to dig out a hydrant is crucial in saving the structure. We are asking our civic minded citizens to adopt a hydrant near them and try to keep it clear for potential use. Your effort may return big dividends when the occasion may arise.

The community fund raising drive to restore the Veterans Memorial as of today has raised \$21,934 of their \$40,000 goal.

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